

REBEL DESTINY

- 765 head was clearest in the quiet of the early morning. A stillness so pronounced that we could feel it surrounded us at the base camp, for at Gankwe the drums had been replaced in the shrines of the gods for whom they speak, and no more guns saluted the spirit of Zimbi, or warned away the evil dead with the powder which was distasteful to ghosts. Zimbi was buried, the grave diggers had bathed and put on fresh loin cloths, the village had been purified, and all was still.
- [183] 512 From our shelter, watching the haze lift, we could see that the river had fallen; the tangled grasses at the bank showed fully a hand's breadth of fresh brown that had the day before been under water. With the coming of the sun things began to stir. The lizards appeared, the chickens came to peck at our shoes, looking for crumbs, and boats began to make shadows across the opposite bank, as the Gankwe women in their small corials went to their fields. At the bow would be a little girl, or a yet smaller boy—as young as four perhaps, for the older ones went with the men to learn a man's work—helping to take the boat up the fast water. All this went on quietly, until we espied three boats running down the rapids and pivoting about in the still water toward our landing place. As they came nearer, we could see that the boats carried no load, and our host, the director of the balata-collecting station, explained that these boats were new and were being taken down river for sale.
- 438 "All the large boats come from top-side," he said. "The men take them clear around to the Marowynne River by way of the canals and there carry loads in them to the stations in the interior. The Saramacca men are fine canoe-men. They like them on the Marowynne. . . . You could use a large boat for your trip up river. Maybe the man will sell one."
- 439 [142] The man in charge of the little flotilla stood more than six feet tall. His face was intricately cicatrized, and he carried himself with a dignity and reserve that surpassed even the way of the village chiefs.

Chapter VIII

PARENTS, CHILDREN, AND GRANDCHILDREN

I

512 **W**E WERE aroused early after our night of stories. The women were moving about, getting their morning meal before daybreak came to give them light for their harvesting. There was much they had to do. Late that afternoon they would be returning to their villages, for the next day was sacred to the Earth Mother, and no work could be done in the fields. Today, added to the round of harvesting were the preparations for the return to their village. The rice that had been cut during the week would have to be carried there for drying and winnowing, and yams and peanuts and beans were to be brought in.

136 [529] Not far off, in the bush, the "baboons" were crying. We had been told how these howling monkeys lived in bands, and how they had an "old man" for leader. Their strange cries, ringing through the forest, sounded like despair made articulate. A terribly moving reiteration of four or five wailing notes went on and on, rising slowly in volume, until their cries blotted out all other sounds, and then, like a wave receding, diminishing until quiet reigned again. But when we had given up listening for its distant echo, there it was again, filling the darkness of the clearing with despair, until, at its very height, we heard the low, penetrating grunts of their "Gaman—Chief" and instantly all was still. They were done for the night. With daylight, they would go deeper into the bush.

Chapter XI

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

I

GRANMAN. Yankuso's day began before the break of dawn. When the day was at its coolest men's hearts were cool, people said here on the river, and when hearts were cool they could be trusted with weighty matters. But long before men came to stand outside the Granman's house advising with him as he lay in his hammock, the women arrived to report in low monotones the happenings of the previous day, and to take orders for the one to follow. 5/2
6/3
[825]

Lying in our hammocks in the council house, separated from the speakers by the wall of palings and perhaps five feet of clearing, we could hear voices outside from a little after three in the morning, until with the coming day the soft footfalls died down and gave way to the sound of stamping mortars and the cries of children recalling their mothers from early tasks. [823]

What was being said outside we could not hear, but as the days wore on we learned to recognize the voices of the speakers. We learned to know from the rapid, contradicting flow of words which followed upon one of the Granman's orders, that it was his principal wife who spoke, or from the halting, crooning phrases, the voice of his eldest daughter, who had mastered her father's gentlest intonations and now of a morning brought them forth as though she were speaking her lesson. We learned to know as well the range and intensity of the subdued grunts with which 194

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Djuka

437 The reply is short and spirited.

"Gimme."

Which does not have to be translated.



574 We sleep that night in the Bush Negro village. A dilapi-
609 dated hut is assigned us, the hut of a dead man. There are
136 tarantulas on the cross-poles; we are not particular. The pad-
dlers sleep elsewhere, being taken into friendly huts about
the village. Except for the ghosts of the departed Bush Ne-
groes, our hut is quite empty. The hammock is slung and the
mosquito netting put in place. Mosquitoes and insect pests
are not as bad in the jungle as commonly reported. They sel-
dom caused us any discomfort. It is true that one of the boys
contracted malaria during an expedition, but the parasites
may have been dormant in his blood for some time pre-
viously. Our precaution against malaria was ten grains of
quinine sulphate each night before retiring under the mos-
quito netting.

● 512 Far into the evening the Negroes will sit around the camp-
[527] fire and tell stories, their loud, musical Negro laughter car-
rying a long distance on the night air. Walking by each hut
we see a tiny light flickering inside. Occasionally an infant
cries. We sit before our doorway, amusing a group of chil-

The Jungle Clearing

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dren with an electric flashlight, throwing the beam upward 5/2 ● into the leaves. At night the atmosphere of the jungle comes close and penetrates everything. We think of the long distance back to white civilization. There comes a song out of the darkness. Near by is a young man carving a token for his woman. The females are busy about the cooking fires. The men are telling stories. For a long time after we have entered the hut and stretched out in the hammocks the hearty black laughter of the bucks keeps us awake. Then all noises cease. For one accustomed to the clang of cities, the silence is audible.